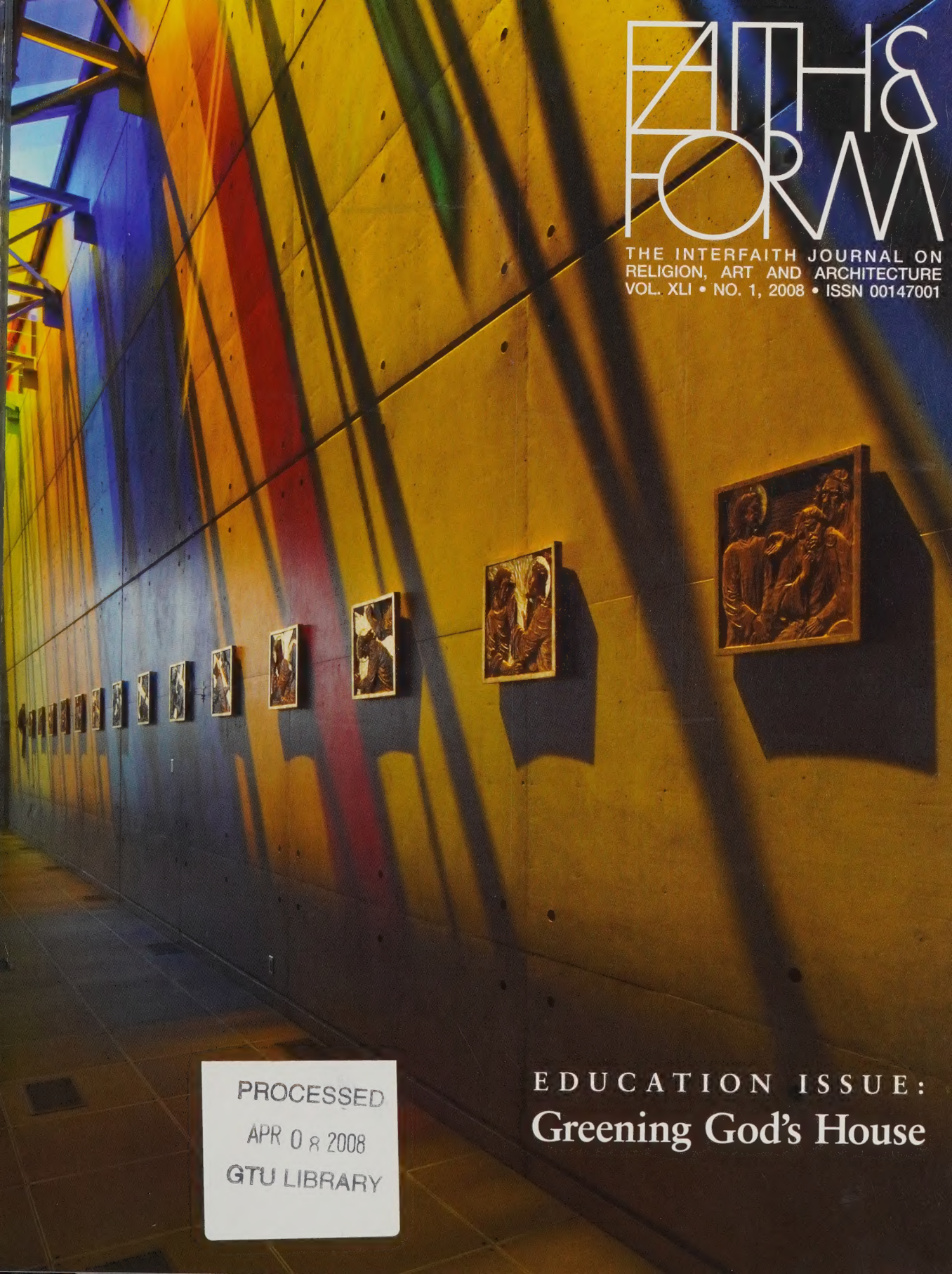


# FAITH & FORM

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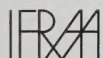
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A potpourri  
of articles  
about new  
developments  
in sacred  
art and  
architecture.

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Interior of St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, Toronto, designed by Larkin Architect Limited, is a LEED Gold Certified building (article begins on page 6). Photo: Martin Knowles

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# GOD'S GREEN EARTH



EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE to open a magazine or a newspaper, watch TV, or surf an Internet news site without finding at least one article about sustainability. There are many reasons to be green: you can reduce your carbon footprint, save money at the gas pump, spare a tree, preserve an endangered species. All of these are good reasons, but these and many more are reactionary. All are

attempts to mend the mess we've made of the planet.

The impetus for sustainability in religion is not reactionary. In faith communities around the world, the green impulse is a direct expression of their embrace of God's creation. Whether to be green is not a choice for many, but rather an integral part of their religious beliefs. Pope John Paul II posited that our environmental crisis is also a spiritual crisis: two sides of the same coin, recognition that we are stewards of this creation, that sustainability is a form of praise.

A new documentary, *Renewal*, tells this story. Produced by Marty Ostrow and Terry Kay Rockefeller, the 90-minute film takes us to religious communities all across the U.S. to show how congregants are supporting sustainability by living their faith.

For example, a Christian congregation in New Jersey discovers that by working with GreenFaith, an environmental coalition, for very little cost they can install a photovoltaic system on the roof of their church to generate their own electricity. That's a big move, but churches can start small. This same congregation spent an afternoon sorting through a week's worth of trash to understand how better to recycle, and how, by making sustainable choices, to reduce their waste footprint.

A community of Buddhists in San Francisco, Green Sangha (which means community in Sanskrit) strives to save trees by promoting the use of recycled paper. One of their projects is to convince magazines to use it (less than 1 percent of the nation's 18,000 magazines do). They convinced me. *Faith & Form* is now printed on recycled paper.

Interfaith Power and Light is active in 20 states across the U.S. to help congregations reduce their use of nonrenewable fuels and increase the use of renewable energy sources. A segment of *Renewal* profiles this national organization and shows how it works to lobby Congress for reforms that promote energy conservation to lessen pollution and address climate change.

One of the most surprising profiles in the film is of a wide-ranging group of Evangelical Christians who are now working together in Kentucky and West Virginia to stop mountain top removal, which literally takes off the heads of Appalachian mountains to extract coal for power plants. The result is nothing less than the rape of the land, devastation of the mountains, erosion, and the pollution of rivers and streams. Though Evangelicals may be among the last to engage in the environmental debate, they are close to those wielding power in this country, and may be effective in making them see the connections between faith and environmentalism.

Communities of faith are leading the way in sustainability because they believe that we are not here to lord over the Earth. That job is already taken.

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT [MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM](mailto:MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM)



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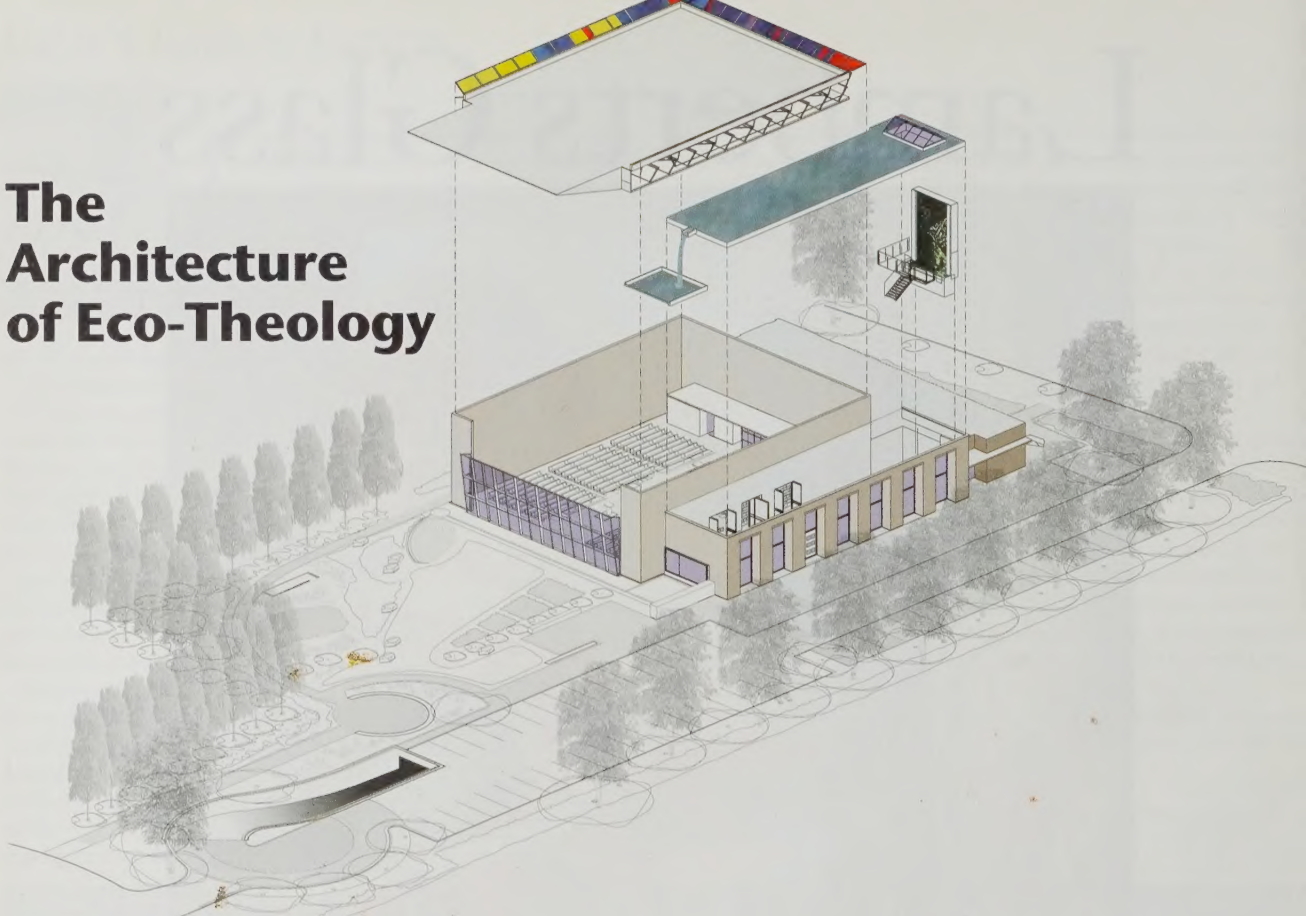
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# The Architecture of Eco-Theology



BY ROBERTO CHIOTTI

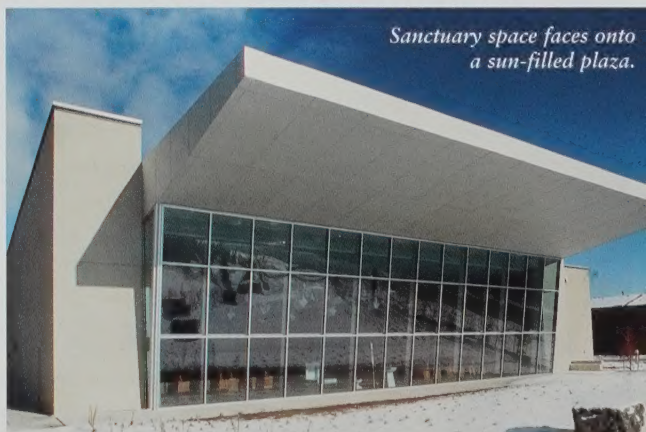
**I**N 1998, the Passionist Community of Canada decided to provide a new legacy for St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin, a Roman Catholic parish in Toronto, Canada, that it has served for more than 53 years. In November of 2006, this legacy was realized with the consecration of a new church that our firm, Larkin Architect, designed, which includes a 750-seat worship space, a gener-

ously proportioned narthex, offices, meeting rooms, and other support facilities for its ongoing ministries. More significantly, it has become the first church in Canada to receive Gold certification from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Green Building Rating System. LEED was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and adapted for use in Canada by the Canada Green Building Council. Both organizations bring together industry leaders to promote high-performance sustainable buildings.

The new church replaces a 500-seat, deteriorating facility that had become prohibitively expensive to operate and maintain. "While reducing energy costs was one of the reasons for building a green church,"

says Father Paul Cusack, C.P., current Pastor at St. Gabriel's, "our primary motivation was to establish a link between the sacredness of the gathered community of faith and the sacredness of the Earth." As such, the new church constitutes a dramatic departure in the design of sacred space. Unlike churches built to inspire a sense of other-worldliness, the new St. Gabriel's is designed to emphasize that when we gather to worship, we do so within the greater context of creation. It has been conceived as an articulation of the eco-theology of Passionist Father Thomas Berry and his belief that the greatest challenge of our times is to establish a mutually enhancing, human-Earth relationship.

*Sanctuary space faces onto a sun-filled plaza.*



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Photo: Steven Evans

*Pockets of outdoor green space are found around the church.*

## ECO-THEOLOGY

It has long been apparent that we are facing an ecological crisis of alarming magnitude. The daily news is filled with stories about the devastating effects of climate change; of deteriorating air and water quality; of the landslides caused by deforestation; of species that are endangered; of rising problems to human health. We are all inextricably part of a human process that is quickly bringing to an end the Cenozoic Age of geological history, that 65-million-year period after the extinction of the dinosaurs, when the great complexity and diversity of plant and animal life that we know today came to flourish. In our race to control and exploit the Earth's natural resources for the benefit of humankind, we have been blind to the fact that we are shutting down the very life-supporting systems that we depend upon for our survival.

How do we weave ourselves back into the web of life? How do we become re-enchanted with the glory of creation? As an architect who designs sacred space, how can I respond to the insights revealed by eco-theology? Once again, I would like to return to the work of Father Berry for the answers. He believes that the real hope lies in our ability to re-establish an integrated sense of the whole, to redefine a cosmology based not upon an anthropocentric view of the human as primary but based instead upon a biocentric understanding of the Earth as primary and the needs of the human as derivative. In order to do this, he believes we need first to examine the inner intentionality of God's universe as manifested by its three creative principles: differentiation, subjectivity, and communion.

According to Father Berry, "differentiation" is the primordial expression of the universe.

Out of the fiery violence of the "Big Bang" came radiation and differentiated particles that through a certain sequence of events found expression in an overwhelming variety of manifestations. The universe is coded for an ever-increasing, nonrepeatable biodiversity as exemplified by the incredible variety of life that has evolved on Earth. From its rich and abundant tropical forests to the stark beauty of its polar regions, the evidence of this tendency towards biodiversity is obvious. Humankind would not have appeared as a species if somehow the process towards increasing biodiversity had been allowed to shut down. In reality, we cannot help but be creative because the universe is creative. Our role as humans must now be to restore the earth's ability to continue its growth towards complexity and differentiation.

The second primary creative principle of the universe as identified by Father Berry is that of increased "subjectivity." Together, every reality that makes up a part of the universe is not just a collection of objects but is a community of subjects. As subjects, we all have an inner dimension, an interior reality that not only reflects the diversity that surrounds us but reflects the original bursting forth of energy at the beginning of time. Our creativity as humans is informed by the diversity of subjectivity that is allowed to declare itself around us. Any human activity that contributes to the impoverishment of the natural world will then inevitably contribute to the impoverishment of our sense of wonderment and awe. With every species that becomes extinct, every mountain that becomes scarred by deforestation, every river that becomes polluted with our industrial wastes, the presence of the divine that inspires our creativity as humans is diminished. Our own ability to survive as a species will depend to a great extent on the ability of all natural entities on the planet, both living and nonliving, to develop their full potential apart from human influence as much as possible.

Father Berry's third creative principle of the universe "is the communion of each reality of the universe with every other reality in the universe." As mentioned before, we are an inextricably related community of subjects. This genetic interrelatedness of everything in the universe to everything else means that the universe is in dialogue with itself as a community. "Everything is intimately present to everything else." The original bursting forth of energy at the beginning of time contained all the elements necessary for the evolution of the universe, up to and including human culture. The potential for religion, liturgy, music, poetry, dance, art, and architecture existed as part of that original expression. This is why we





*Cross-axial view of the narthex, with 'Living Wall' at the far end.*

*Photo: Steven Evans*

are connected to the stars in the night sky and to all living and nonliving realities on the planet, why they are deserving of our awe and reverence, and why we must celebrate them in our creativity.

As humans, the time has come for us to forfeit our role as exploitative dominators and to assume the more responsible role of participatory co-creators with God by realigning our sense of creativity with the creative principles of the universe and the planet. Only then can we contribute to the healing of the Earth in all its life systems and achieve a relationship with the Earth that is mutually enhancing.

#### FROM THEOLOGY TO PRAXIS

In designing the new church for the St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin Roman Catholic Parish and the Passionist Community of Canada, the parish building committee sought to demonstrate how it could respond to this imperative in a tangible, realistic, and meaningful way.

The different approach is apparent from outside the church. Distinct from most suburban churches that are surrounded by huge asphalt parking lots, St. Gabriel's accommodates the majority of its parking underground. This unprecedented investment ensures that a large portion of the ground plane remains devoted to the garden, landscaped to recall pre-settlement, indigenous ecosystems and to provide a broad range of color, depth, and wildlife habitat throughout the seasons.

Preferential parking spaces are provided for those who carpool and those who drive hybrid vehicles. The unique charism of the Canadian

Passionists attracts worshipers from well beyond their traditional parish boundaries. The new church, conveniently located within a few hundred yards of two subway stations, encourages these parishioners to leave their cars at home and arrive via public transit.

After making their way through the garden, parishioners emerge upon a generously proportioned piazza designed to be used as a seasonal outdoor gathering space and staging area for weddings and funerals. The deeply recessed arcade that articulates the front wall of the narthex overlooking the piazza is a contemporary expression of the form and architectural detailing of the ancient Basilica of Sts. John and Paul at the Passionist world headquarters in Rome. Made of a unique limestone from the province of Manitoba, distinguished by its many embedded fossils of ancient sea crustaceans, the fabric of the narthex defines an important chapter in the geological history of Canada.

#### ADDRESSING THE SUN

When asked by his own community to suggest an appropriate ecological response, Father Berry replied with this simple question: "How will you address the sun?" In contrast to most churches that are inwardly focused and employ stained glass to create an other-worldly liturgical environment, the entire south façade of the worship space at St. Gabriel's is glazed with clear glass. This has been done in order to passively harness the winter sun's energy and to extend the sacred space of the worship area into the sacred space of the world beyond, emphasizing





*Detail of 'Living Wall' in narthex, which helps purify the air.*  
Photo: Roberto Chioffi

that when we gather to worship, we do so within the greater context of creation: the primary revelatory experience of the divine. As such, the projecting canopy, glazed south façade, and adjacent garden replace the traditional steeple tower and peaked roof as iconic features of a new church typology.

The remaining three walls of exposed architectural concrete serve as a constantly changing canvas for the dynamic play of natural light that is filtered by the colored glass panels of the continuous perimeter skylight and further fractured by wall-mounted dichroic coated reflectors. In effect, the cosmos shapes the liturgical environment and participates in the ritual action of the liturgy. Similarly, time also takes on a cosmic dimension with the Earth's daily rotation and orbit around the sun. Seasonal influences on the sun's intensity and inclination, together with the daily diversity of weather conditions, ensure that no two gatherings of worshippers will experience an identical liturgical environment.

The pews, reclaimed from the original church and refurbished, have been arranged antiphonally in the new 750-seat worship space. The facing rows embrace a sacred north-south axis that begins in the garden and terminates at the north wall of the nave with the tabernacle. Immediately adjacent to the south wall of glass, with the garden as backdrop, the original marble font, redesigned to flow with "living water," emphasizes that when we are baptized into the faith community, our baptism also consecrates us for the sacred Earth community. The refurbished and transformed marble ambo and altar are also situated along this sacred axis, with space enough to allow for processing the Word before it is proclaimed. Each has its own space defined by a marble platform with just a single step up from the floor needed to facilitate sightlines. A transparent screen, superimposed with etched glass panels salvaged from the front doors of the original church and depicting images of the Passion, delineates an intimate chapel of reservation at the north end of this sacred axis. In each case, these precious elements transferred from the original church were lovingly restored but also transformed in ways to highlight the new perspective.

Movement from the south to the north is reinforced by the colors of the skylight. Brilliant yellows are situated closest to the sun's intense light at the south end, whereas the deeper, richly hued azure blues and crimsons at the north end provide a beautifully mysterious and meditative light for the chapel of reservation and the adjacent reconciliation room. The ceiling of the worship space stops short of the walls on all sides, appearing to hover weightlessly over the congregation, the cosmic coloured light of the perimeter skylights spilling into their midst from an unseen source high above.

The nave is entered from the narthex on the cross-axis through a pair of massive, 15-foot-high paneled doors reminding us that Christ is our "gateway" to salvation. This central ceremonial aisle ends at the sacred axis, facing the presidential chair, which is located in the front row of opposite pews amongst the gathered worshipping community. The space at the crossing remains void, free to receive the gifts, the bride and groom, or the body of the deceased. It also serves as a place to identify the liturgical season, allowing the altar to remain unfettered as a primary symbol.

The narthex is terminated at the north end by a sky-lit "living wall." Water running over the roots of the living wall's plant material conditions and purifies the air of the narthex and worship space. The enzymes in the roots of the tropical plants process the volatile organic compounds and other atmospheric pollutants, while the water provides natural humidification during winter and de-humidification in summer. Parishioners arriving from the underground garage are drawn into the light by the "living wall" and are reminded of their baptismal covenant by the sound of its purifying waters. They are also reminded of how the





Photo: Roberto Chiotti

*Pews were salvaged from the previous church and refurbished.*

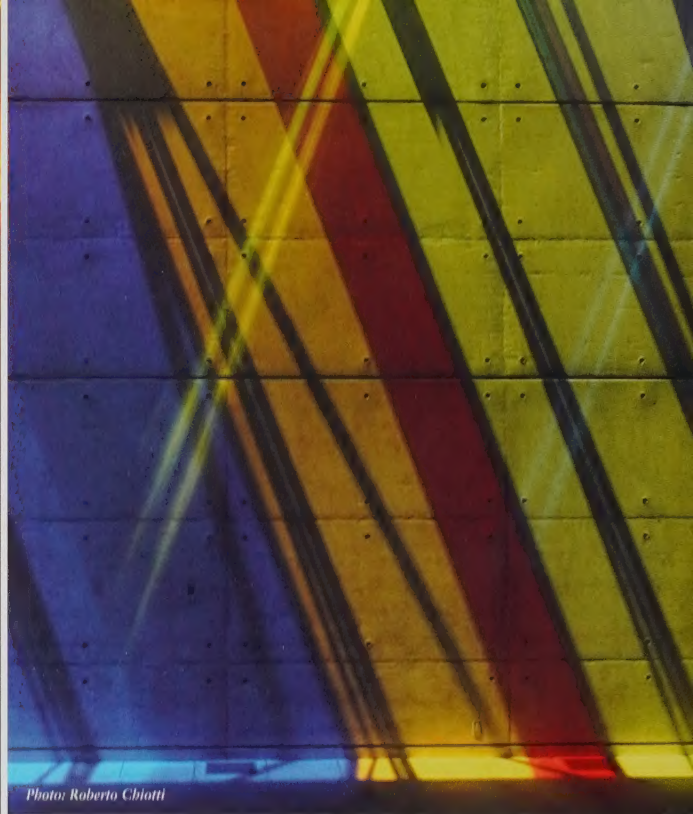


Photo: Roberto Chiotti

*West wall of the sanctuary, alive with colored light from stained and dichroic glass.*

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*Sun-filled sanctuary is distinguished by its durable materials.*  
Photo: Steven Evans

rainforests serve a crucial role for Earth's climate. At the opposite end of the narthex is a framed view of an outdoor water feature that harvests rainwater from the roof which in turn supports plant life within a constructed wetland. Potable water usage is significantly reduced by a highly efficient drip irrigation system for the garden, waterless urinals, dual low flush toilets, and low-flow fittings on all sinks. This helps to complete the narrative that underscores the irony of holding the precious natural resource of water as a primary religious symbol of purification, while willfully contributing to its ongoing degradation.

#### GREEN STRATEGIES THROUGHOUT

Buildings in North America consume 40 percent of the world's total energy, 25 percent of its wood harvest, 16 percent of its water, and contribute 30 percent of its carbon dioxide emissions. As a LEED Gold certified building, the entire building process, from design through construction to the selection of furnishings, has been researched and rethought to embrace and reflect the underlying eco-theology that seeks to mitigate this impact. Maximizing insulation values; specifying highly efficient mechanical systems incorporating heat recovery methodologies; the supplemental use of passive solar heating, along with utilizing the thermal mass of the building to store and retain heat; maximizing natural ventilation and daylighting; use of room occupancy and daylight sensors to control electrical lighting; use of carbon dioxide sensors to alert the building's mechanical systems when fresh air is needed; all are strategies that have been used to reduce dependency on nonrenewable energy resources.

Minimizing finishes beyond those provided by the building's concrete structure; redirecting construction waste from landfill to recycling

opportunities; maximizing the use of locally obtained materials; and the use of recycled steel; and substituting a percentage of the cement with slag (a waste by-product of the steel industry) not only represent good stewardship of precious Earth resources, but along with the energy savings, also contribute to good stewardship of the parish's financial resources through a reduction of ongoing long-term operational and maintenance costs. Further, the re-use of existing pews, stained glass, etched glass, and liturgical furnishings also helps to achieve these important goals, while providing continuity of the rich heritage of Passionist presence within the parish.

The use of low- or zero-VOC (volatile organic compound-emitting) materials and finishes; carpets with a percentage of their fibers made from beets and corn stalks; formaldehyde-free wheat strawboard in all millwork; GreenGuard™ certified office and meeting room furnishings that meet strict environmental guidelines in their production; the purchase of power from a green electrical utility, and the incorporation of a green maintenance protocol: all contribute to further reductions in the parish's ecological footprint, and help to create a healthier environment for staff and parishioners alike.

Incorporating these and other sustainable design strategies has contributed to an understanding of early scriptural teachings that emphasized the sacredness of all creation and not just the sacredness of humankind. The new building as sacred space redefined presents a "Gestalt whole," and like the medieval cathedrals of Europe, becomes itself a form of catechesis, engaging the senses and inviting transformation. <sup>18</sup>

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# WORKING WITH ARTISANS FOR GREENER PLACES OF WORSHIP



BY MEREDITH N. AND NICK C. STRANGE

*"Be mindful of your  
footprint on this Earth"*

*Rabbi Warren G. Stone<sup>1</sup>*

VALUATING OUR AFFECT on the world's ecology is not easy. The desire to be green forces everyone involved in the creation, restoration, and maintenance of sacred spaces and ritual objects to ask hard questions about resources and methods. For artisans, it means learning to consider the whole life cycle of what we design, use, and make. For architects, designers, clergy, building clients, and others commissioning religious objects, it means working with artisans in efficient and ecologically responsible ways.

## WORKING EFFICIENTLY WITH ARTISANS

Those commissioning artisan-made pieces for sacred spaces have great influence; their decisions affect whole congregations and multiple generations. Knowing what to expect can make an unfamiliar process easier and, thus, more efficient for clients and artisans alike. Artisans differ in how they manage their commissions, but all share many methods and concerns. It is important to remember that an artisan is not an artist. The difference is largely one of purpose. An artisan sets out to create something functional, an expression of craft; an artist, something primarily autotelic, something existing for its own sake. Of course, art frequently does have a purpose; this is especially true of pieces created for religious buildings or rituals. But much of what we call art actually begins as craft: the maker is

NICK AND MEREDITH STRANGE, PH.D., ARE THE OWNERS OF THE CENTURY GUILD, A STUDIO IN GRAHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, DEVOTED TO DESIGNING AND BUILDING ONE-OF-A-KIND WOODEN FURNITURE. SINCE 1982 THEY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE CREATION OF CHANCEL FURNITURE AND OTHER PIECES FOR MORE THAN 30 SACRED SPACES, BOTH OLD AND NEW. THEY CAN BE REACHED AT: [INFO@THECENTURYGUILD.COM](mailto:INFO@THECENTURYGUILD.COM).



*Quarter-sawn white oak columbarium designed by The Century Guild to blend Gothic and Georgian styles, for All Souls Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.*



interested in both usefulness and appearance. As a craftsperson, he or she possesses a large amount of highly technical knowledge, much of it concerned with using specialized equipment. Such knowledge combined with native skill actually define *artisan*.

The next important thing to remember: foster mutual trust. Many clients seem to see the artisan as genetically predisposed to overcharge and under-deliver. This misconception seldom prevents them from answering the most crucial question the artisan will ask: "What exactly do you want and what do you want it to do?" *It will* make it difficult for them to answer the second most significant one: "What is your budget; how much do you hope to spend?" When working with artisans it is also important to have both a specific idea of what you want and what you expect it to do and a general idea of what you want it to look like.

For example, a new church needs a pulpit. The client should decide who will design it and what it will be made of. Since most artisans choose to work mainly in one medium, that material usually determines the type of artisan who will build a piece. So, who *will* design it, the church's architect or the artisan who will actually make it? Often, it is both. In our experience, architects usually concentrate on the building itself. When they design ritual pieces, most provide conceptual designs, thereby furnishing an idea of appearance and function but insufficient details to allow the maker to start constructing immediately. Clients should expect their artisans of choice to spend time translating those concepts into drawings from which the piece can actually be built. Thus, clients should realize that part of what they are paying for is design work. If this is a true one-of-a-kind piece, expect the design to be a significant part of the final cost, usually from 10 to 15 percent. Why? Because the cost of designing cannot be amortized; that one piece has to bear it all.

How should clients pick an artisan they can trust? Artisans devoted to a very specific product are the easiest to evaluate: ask to see a portfolio and, if possible, an actual example of their work. If the portfolio is now a Web site, visit it. All sorts of information can be found on such sites: extent of experience; personal philosophies; working methods. This information can reassure clients worried about spending large sums before they actually commission a work. Reassurance is especially important when choosing someone to design or build something truly unique. Check references: word of mouth, client lists, letters of recommendation. Perhaps circumstances warrant a visit to the artisan's studio.

Regrettably, even careful clients will occasionally pick an artisan who is not up to the task. There are, however, warning signs. Beware of a very low price. This may indicate lack of experience. Beware of "no problem." Not every project is complicated, but facile use of comforting phrases may have more to do with salesmanship than with any other skill. Beware of artisans who are not prepared to explain what they doing and why they are doing it. Finally, beware of artisans who assert that their materials and methods are environmentally pure. They may be woefully uninformed. Despite difficulties, there are choices open to artisans and their clients who want to work in environmentally responsible ways.

#### WORKING WITH ARTISANS IN ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE WAYS

For artisans the question is not "How do I become green?" It is "What degree of un-green can I live with?" There are no guidelines — like those for LEED certification allowing a certain way of practicing a craft to be recognized as green. Part of the problem is limited control; all artisans have to work with materials created using environmentally harmful processes. Another part of the problem lies with the "old ways," methods that currently cannot be replaced. Thus, artisans working in traditional media, such as ceramics, glass, metal, stone, and wood, face serious questions. What resources were used to create an object? What effect did those resources have on the environment?

Whatever the medium, one step seems universally un-green: that concerned with colorings and coatings. All tints, glazes, dyes, patina-solutions, finishes, and other protectants are likely to be harmful to the environment to some extent. The un-green quality of other steps in the creative process differs from craft to craft. As a rule, though, un-green starts with producing the raw material itself.

#### Ceramics

Clay must be mined; any substance that must be mined is not really renewable. Also, mining uses water, much water, in controlling dust if not in the actual drilling. Open-pit clay mines mean big trucks and "draglines, power shovels, front-end loaders, backhoes, scraper-loaders, and shale-planers." Processing uses more water and more energy. Furthermore, once the clay is processed, it must be obtained by the artisan, an act involving still more energy. While the actual shaping of that clay might be a very green process involving some water and a potter's wheel, when it comes to subsequent steps, things change. Ceramicist Laura Zindel explains:

"Why I hesitate to call what I make eco-friendly starts with the glazing and firing process and where the ingredients for glaze come from. Silica or quartz is the main ingredient in all ceramic glazes. Raw silica causes serious health problems and is very dangerous to mine. All glazes that have a color other than clear — blue, green, brown, yellow, or red — have oxides and heavy metals in them like copper, and iron and cobalt. These materials are mined . . . and the people who do it are putting their lives at risk to pull these materials out of the earth. This is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of ceramic materials, but I think it is enough. [Also,] all glazed ceramics are fired and all firing sends emissions into our atmosphere."<sup>2</sup>

So how does Zindel deal with such masses of un-green in her chosen craft? By choosing to buy materials from sources devoted to recycling, and by using the most efficient kiln. She controls what she can.

#### Glass

Glass and ceramics share many un-green attributes. In the first place, the raw silica for glass is mined; then this silica is superheated to create a liquid, which becomes glass when cooled. The amount of energy needed is illustrated by what it takes to create "natural" glass: obsidian (formed by volcanic eruptions) and fulgurites (formed by lightning). Thus, artisans working in clear glass face eco-issues even before they shape it, by using more heat or by generating more dust. Workers in stained glass face even more dangers, many caused by exposure to toxic solder and flux and poisonous acids. As a result, the government requires the air and surfaces in professional stained-glass studios and work areas to be regularly monitored to determine how well toxic substances are being controlled.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, when it comes to stained glass, the responsible client will choose an artisan who respects how dangerous the as-yet-cannot-be-replaced "old ways" are.

#### Metals

As a raw material, metal too spends those eco-dollars quickly. Mining and extracting consume great amounts of energy and some nasty substances as well. Forming, shaping, and shipping metals are energy-intensive, but metals — especially aluminum and steel and iron — are the materials most of us associate with recycling. Traditionally, most artisans working in ecclesiastical contexts use gold, silver, bronze, or brass. Because these latter metals are sometimes treated with toxic acids to produce special finishes, the environmental-



ly conscious client will question that technique. Is the effect worth it?

Precious metals can be useful in small amounts. In gilding: a “mere gram of gold — the size of a grain of rice — can be beaten to a gold film covering one square metre.”<sup>75</sup> This and gold’s resistance to tarnish make gilding on wood a good choice for congregations looking for that special radiance on an eco-friendly budget.

Iron in ecclesiastical settings is often used architecturally — in screens and gates — and, of course, in older churches as hardware. Much of this ironwork is very valuable despite its “base metal” nature. Some of it is even accomplished

enough to be “art,” such as that from Samuel Yellin, the great Polish-American blacksmith whose work can be found in such sacred structures as Congregation Emanu-El, St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine (all in New York City), and the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. People at St. Thomas Church, which has Yellin door hardware from c. 1913, removed a door and, knowing what they had, put that hardware in their safe. In 1991, it was reused, incorporated into an oak statue base especially designed to accommodate it, thus illustrating one congregation’s knowledge of and commitment to preserving its heritage. One of the benefits of having artisan-made pieces is that, if perceived as special and if properly cared for, they may attain the status of art. Such craft-turned-art is very green: resources are seldom used to replace it.

### Stonework

Stone too is mined, making it another non-renewable material requiring much energy to acquire and shape into its final form, especially if imported. Shaping stone may also require another stone: diamonds (many of them man-made) are used for cutting, grinding, and polishing. Some manufacturers produce synthetic stones they call green because they are not quarried. Clients thinking of using such products should investigate their eco-sensitivity. Natural or not, all stone can be recycled — as aggregate; if that is the best use for it depends on whether the shape and the desirability of the particular piece make it worth salvaging.

Most of the nonarchitectural stone in sacred spaces is used for statues and in chancel pieces. Many stone altars and baptismal fonts are old

and original to the spaces in which they are found. A relatively new “old way” with stone involves re-use. Want an impressive stone reredos? Find one no longer in use. Examples abound in earlier times of moving pieces from one sacred setting to another. This is common with stained glass as well. Recently there seems to be a rediscovery of this very sensible method of conserving resources.

Working stone, like working wood, create “drop”: material that falls away in shaping. Skilled artisans can control this waste, but it still occurs. Using such stone has obvious virtues for congregations looking to spend their dollars eco-wisely. For example, if the project is a stone baptismal font, visiting the artisan will reveal if there is drop of sufficient size to be useful. This approach has drawbacks: what is the right size may not be the right color or type. It is, however, worth a try. Perhaps the font can be redesigned to accommodate what is available. Realize, however, that using drop does not necessarily make the stone cheaper; it does, however, turn waste into useful material.

Whatever the source, most stone is best if protected, and the protectants usually belong to that group of un-green coatings present in all our crafts. Marble and granite, for example, are often coated with solvent-based silicone sealers that rapidly evaporate, sending undesirable emissions into the air. Treated stone is safe, but the silicone eventually wears away, making retreating necessary.

### Woodwork

Clearly it is not easy being green, and woodworking is no exception. Although wood is not mined, obtaining it does mean cutting down trees, and a dead tree is an emitter of carbon. And while wood is renewable, many — such as mahogany and other tropical hardwoods — grow slowly and are not, therefore, as renewable as others. Some currently fashionable “woods” are not woods at all; bamboo is actually a hollow grass and thus not a truly versatile material for woodworkers. Its current popularity, however, indicates an increasing interest in growing and harvesting wood in eco-friendly ways.

Many hardwoods are now certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international group setting standards that should, in time, help reduce ecological damage caused by careless growers and harvesters. In this country, the ecologically responsible woodworker can request FSC-certified woods from suppliers found on the FSC-US Web site. That doesn’t mean it is readily available. Apparently, there is not yet a great call for FSC-certified wood,



Water-gilt 23kt gold frieze on a walnut tabernacle designed by The Kerns Group for St. Bede Catholic Church, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Photos: Nick C. Strange





Photos: Richard Taughn

Statue base for "Our Lady of Fifth Avenue," designed by Gerald Allen for St. Thomas Church, New York.

especially for woods such as walnut where the demand is greater than the supply. Once woodworkers start demanding FSC wood, growers will no doubt start supplying it. This increased eco-consciousness is already developing. We, for example, recommend walnut over mahogany because its source is usually closer, and it is thus more efficiently acquired. Whatever the species, the energy needed to process and ship wood can be considerable. Wood-choice is one place eco-sensitive woodworkers can exercise control, as long as clients will accept recommendations. Like stoneworkers, woodworkers may have drop or left-over lumber. Ask. They know what they have and can help decide what is suitable for a specific project.

On the subject of materials, it is important to note that the price of artisanal woodwork is governed more by the cost of labor than by the cost of wood. This is true even if clients hunger for an exotic species such as bubinga. In these cases, the material may be a larger percentage of the total price, but the number of man-hours needed for designing and building is still going to have a greater affect on the cost. The simpler the design, the fewer man-hours needed to complete it and the lower the cost.

Even though furniture makers are not large consumers of wood (in 2004, 11.5 billion board-feet of hardwoods were harvested in the U.S.; furniture makers used only about 1.5 billion), they still need to consider how the processes they employ affect the environment. Artisanal woodworkers do not necessarily use high-tech equipment; in our projects, much can best be

done by hand. Also, because artisans tend to be low-volume producers, their equipment may use little energy, as it is not powered all the time. Nonetheless, all of us should work to conserve energy as part of our efforts to reduce un-green operations in our studios.

Another challenge is making wood staining and finishing more green. Coloring agents, which come in several different formulations, must be chosen with the final finishing product in mind. Water-based finishes require water-based fillers and stains. Solvent-based finishes are more forgiving; they will take either water-based or solvent-based stains. Shelf life for all these products is usually very long, so the green issues concern how the stain is applied — sprayed, brushed, or wiped — and how dangerous fumes are controlled. These are pretty much the major issues with finishes, too. No matter what the formula, if it is sprayed it will put particulates and solvents into the air. While common in the automotive industry, water-based sprayed finishes for wood have yet to be well researched. Because they essentially represent new technology, the most important question — how well they hold up over decades of use and exposure to sunlight — cannot be answered with any certainty. This makes us reluctant to use them for ecclesiastical projects.

All finishing generates hazardous waste. As small generators, artisans may have access to local hazardous-waste collection centers for waste from their spray systems. Brushes and rags used in other application methods can be allowed to dry out and, once they are solvent-free, thrown away. The longevity required of ecclesiastical pieces also determines our choice of finish. Lacquer leaves more finish on the piece, thus initially protecting it more than oil. Nevertheless, we recommend hand-applied oil finishes. When lacquer fails, only serious work involving seriously un-green fluids will remove it and allow refinishing. An oil finish can be easily renewed by hand, in place. The piece will not need to be dipped in chemical strippers that could damage it beyond redemption.


As if these stain and finish issues were not enough, there is the adhesive challenge as well. Woodworkers use a lot of glue, but the standard ones are water based and are considered eco-friendly, both to make and use. Problems arise with the urea resin glues used in most plywood and MDF (medium-density fiberboard); those glues contain formaldehyde. Cutting regular plywood and MDF releases formaldehyde into the air and fills a studio's dust collection system with some very nasty sawdust. Environmentally conscious clients will specify MDF that is formaldehyde free. The Forest Stewardship Council certifies panel

products that are both formaldehyde free *and* made with sustainable wood.

## Hardware

We try to use hardware that is as green as possible, even though it is hard to come by. If we can determine the source we choose American or European manufacturers, thus supporting fabricators who are likely to follow eco-friendly standards. For ecclesiastical projects our hardware is often custom made, and we always specify *no* lacquer. Lacquering may prevent tarnishing, but in a few decades the lacquer will fail, the hardware will start to look flaky, and only noxious fluids can get the failed lacquer off. The "old way" is better, even though it means regularly removing tarnish.

## CONCLUSION

Clients dedicated to a green agenda and wanting artisans of like mind, should determine whether the artisans are using more eco-friendly materials, monitoring sources for un-green practices, working to reduce un-green operations in the studio and in the field, and offering alternatives to un-green practices in the use and care of their work. Clients who want the most eco-sensitive woodwork should specify domestic species; use the highest quality materials they can afford (this reduces waste: less firewood-quality drop); specify formaldehyde-free panel products; and specify oil finishes or at least pre-catalyzed lacquer (to reduce waste). They will remember that longevity is the most sustainable choice of all, and will focus on quality of materials, design, and engineering. Even if some of the "old ways" cannot be jettisoned, many can be modified to create greener places of worship. 

EARN AIA CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT FOR THIS ARTICLE BY ANSWERING THE EDUCATION ISSUE QUESTIONS POSTED ON THE IFRAA WEBSITE: [AIA.ORG/IFRAA](http://AIA.ORG/IFRAA).

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted at [www.grist.org/comments/interactivist/2007/05/28/stone](http://www.grist.org/comments/interactivist/2007/05/28/stone).

<sup>2</sup> Laura Zindel ([www.zindelceramics.com](http://www.zindelceramics.com)) in an e-mail to M. Strange. See also: [oneblackbird.blogspot.com/2007/07/little-more-green.html](http://oneblackbird.blogspot.com/2007/07/little-more-green.html).

<sup>3</sup> The Stained Glass Association of America. See [www.stainedglass.org](http://www.stainedglass.org)>Air Monitoring Program>General Information.

<sup>4</sup> Gold, for example takes cyanide or mercury. A new way uses a bacterium to extract gold from sulfide ores: the bacterium eats the sulfur, leaving the gold behind. See John Emsley's *Nature's Building Blocks: An A-Z Guide to the Elements* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], p. 168.

<sup>5</sup> Emsley, p. 169.





# SPIRITUAL GREEN: A CONVERSATION WITH JONATHAN F. P. ROSE

By JUDITH DUPRÉ

*Jonathan Rose's business, not-for-profit, and public policy work focuses on creating a more environmentally and socially responsible world. His firm, Jonathan Rose Companies LLC, carries out the mission of repairing the fabric of communities by collaborating with cities, towns, and not-for-profits to plan, develop, or acquire environmentally responsible projects, creating vibrant, diverse cultural centers with a balance of jobs, housing for all income levels, and open land and mass transit. Rose is a leading thinker in the Smart Growth, affordable housing, and green building movements. He serves on the Boards of the Enterprise Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Urban Land Institute. He also serves on the Leadership Councils of Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental*

**Judith Dupré:** What is the overall focus of the Rose Companies?

**Jonathan Rose:** Our mission is inspired by a principle common to all religions: it is expressed in Judaism as *tikkun olam*, which means to repair the fabric of the world. Since the U.S. is going to grow over the next 30 years by 94 million people, and we as a nation have in no way engaged our thinking as to how to manage that, the big-picture mission of our firm is to address that question through our core real estate practice groups: planning, development, program management, and investment.

Our firm understands buildings, communities, and regions as complex, adaptive, and interdependent systems. We think regionally to create transformative solutions. We embrace healthy communities that are green, socially responsible, and culturally, economically, and environmentally diverse. We plan communities that are walkable, linked with mass transit, and that preserve as much open space as pos-

sible. And we build, and help not-for-profit build, green buildings. These are all critical for dealing with climate change and environmental diversity, the path to a healthy future.

Our planning group works on large-scale issues, such as writing the green building guidelines for the rebuilding of southern Louisiana, post-Katrina, as well as on a smaller scale, helping not-for-profits that have a block or a site and need a master plan to make the best use of their land.

Our owners representation group collaborates closely with our planning team in cities and town centers—places that are walkable or near rail systems. We help cities and not-for-profits design and build the social and cultural infrastructures of these communities, and we work with museums, libraries, performing arts centers, school systems, and religious organizations as their agents to help them conceive and manage the design and construction of these projects. The only way we are going to solve



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JUDITH DUPRÉ IS A MEMBER OF FAITH & FORM'S EDITORIAL BOARD AND HAS MOST RECENTLY WRITTEN MONUMENTS: AMERICA'S HISTORY IN ART AND MEMORY.

Photo: Mick Hales



*Located on the Hudson River north of New York City, the Garrison Institute is housed in a 77,000-square-foot facility on the grounds of a former Capuchin monastery.*





*The Dalai Lama addressing a conference of Tibetan college students at the Garrison Institute.*

Photo: Nate Binzen

our growth problem is by creating greater density, and the only way to create greater density in a way that people will aspire to, is to have a richer social and cultural infrastructure and a deeper, green infrastructure of parks, gardens, and waterfront areas.

We also engage communities as green real estate developers. All our projects are on walkable main streets, next to transit, or in downtown areas. They are green in themselves and are often connected to green areas, whether parkways, rail trails, waterfronts, or river corridors. Lastly, we created the country's first green investment fund, which is designed for high-net-worth individuals and endowments to invest in green real estate for the long term.

**JD:** You co-founded the Garrison Institute. How did that come about?

**JR:** Our firm works with the Open Space Institute, a not-for-profit organization that is preserving land along the Hudson River. They were trying to preserve a key parcel of land, and it came with a monastery that had been used for about 70 years by the Capuchin order. OSI asked us if they bought the land would we be interested in the building, and we said yes. Monasteries are places of retreat, but are also places of social service and social action. This monastery in particular was once a training ground for monks who wanted to go out into the world and serve. Since we live in a society where very few people want to become monks for life, we asked how do you carry the tradition of contemplation and social action into the future?

**JD:** What is the Institute's purpose?

**JR:** We seek to learn from the world's contemplative traditions, the core wisdom of which is that all is one, and to translate it into social and

environmental action. Contemplative practice can bring about deeper states of thought from which fresh insights can arise. We host teachers from many of the great religious traditions—Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism—who come to the Institute for study and renewal. Typically, the goal of a retreat is to use the contemplative process to come to a deeper understanding of things, to break down barriers between people, and make them realize that they can solve problems better together. We have created a series of initiatives that then take that wisdom and apply it in practical ways to the social and environmental issues of our time. For example, since it's clear our society is not effectively dealing with the pressing issue of climate change, we held a retreat for the leaders of major environmental organizations which resulted in "1Sky," a rapidly growing campaign on climate change that is a collaboration among 85 groups, all speaking with one voice. 1Sky has reached beyond the traditional boundaries of environmentalism to include youth, green jobs, and other movements.

**JD:** What practical advice, based on your renovation of the Garrison Institute, can you give readers who have older buildings?

**JR:** The first step to look at is the location of the building. More energy is used getting to and from the building than is used by the building itself. So the location of a building is essential; it's best if it is in a walkable or transit-accessible location. If not, then a congregation or school should encourage people to carpool. The religious community could make a huge environmental impact simply by encouraging carpooling for services, religious education, and other programs. It also builds community. Secondly, buildings possess something called

"embodied energy," the energy that it took to make and transport the building's materials, for example, and the energy to heat the kilns to make the bricks in the building. When you demolish an existing building, you're throwing out all that embodied energy. When you reuse an existing building it is, by its very nature, greener and more energy efficient. Because we were reusing a monastery as a monastery, in effect, all the walls were in the right places. We wanted a beautiful meditation hall, and there is one there. We wanted an auditorium; there's one there. So we did very little work in terms of moving walls around. The only things we rebuilt were the bathrooms. Older religious buildings were usually made of brick or stone, so one should design to take advantage of the natural heat-storing and -cooling benefits of these materials. Computerized energy modeling is inexpensive, and can provide an excellent guide to where to expose the materials and where to add insulation.

At the Institute, the lighting and heating systems are entirely new and more energy efficient. After the initial renovation, we subsequently installed a ground source heat pump to air condition and heat the meditation hall and auditorium. In many old buildings, there is one thermometer for the whole building, so some spaces are overheated, leading to many opened windows. One easy and inexpensive thing we did to correct that was to put an individual control valve on every radiator; this cost can often be paid back in a year. Every bathroom in the Garrison Institute has an occupancy sensor so the lights turn on or off automatically. Use of such a sensor would also be useful in spaces in a house of worship that have sporadic use, and again would pay back in less than a year.

We also focus on energy efficiency. One of the easiest things to do is to caulk and weather strip windows and doors, insulate old pipes, add insulation to roofs; all of these are inexpensive and easy ways to save money on heating and cooling. We air condition only the main chapel because it is not cost effective to air condition the entire building. In America, we tend to over-air condition and we thus waste a lot of energy.

**JD:** How can churches make their food programs and catering for events more sustainable?

**JR:** Almost all of the food at the Institute comes from our own gardens, local farmers, and green markets, and is seasonal. It's amazing how many farms there are near our cities. The Garrison Institute is only one hour north





Photo: Mick Hales

of New York City, yet there are enough farms locally to feed our guests. We measure ourselves by the number of days a person is at the Institute. We count about 15,000 people days a year, which requires a large enough volume of food to make us a reliable customer; connecting to the local farm community is healthier, greener, and has less transportation impact than depending on distant suppliers. Because many institutional cleaning materials are often toxic, we also switched to green cleaning materials to enhance human health. We recycle our waste and compost our garbage. We look at all the inputs and outputs of the facility to determine how to be as responsible as we can.

**JD:** What exterior changes can be made?

**JR:** Parking lots are enormous sources of pollution because oil drips onto the lots, then rain washes it into the watershed. A lot of the parking we provide is made of a permeable pavement, which controls pollution by allowing water to naturally filter through the soil. Many parking lots at houses of worship are filled to capacity only on the major holidays; at other times the lots are not fully used. At the Garrison Institute, we've sized our main parking lot to just what's needed for average use; everything needed for overflow is permeable concrete block through which the grass grows: it looks just like grass, it's stable, a truck can drive on it, and most important, the water

drains through it so the ground can filter the water and recharge the aquifer.

Outside the building, you can do many things to lessen the environmental impact. For example, use more natural plant materials and fewer insecticides and fertilizers and, in dryer climates, less water. Fifty percent of all pure water in America is used to water lawns—a huge waste! Find indigenous, native plant species that use less water. Many landscape architects know how to create xeriscapes of trees, shrubs, and ground covers that can be more beautiful than grass and also work better for the environment.

**JD:** What long-term green measures can be taken?

**JR:** Religious organizations could become more engaged in their communities, and be not just the Sabbath spokesperson for the environment but the everyday spokesperson. It is beneficial to look at how spiritual study and practice tie into social and environmental justice, so congregants can learn how to live these principles in their lives and work. The Garrison Institute's Hudson River Project brings together environmentalists and religious leaders to find commonality. One result is that some rabbis, priests, and ministers have joined town-planning boards to become the holders of community values; instead of environmental impact statements, they call for

values impact statements. That is a leadership role other religious leaders should be encouraged to take.

Another important thing congregations can do is create a stewardship plan for their lands. Many own more land than they need, and this presents extraordinary opportunities for long-term stewardship. We are working with a wonderful group of nuns, ROAR, which stands for Religious Orders Along the (Hudson) River. Together, they own many thousands of acres along the Hudson, and are working to protect the land, water, animals, and plants on their properties.

**JD:** Many congregations have older structures that are too large for the current population. At what point do you look to a new building to more realistically address the space that's needed?

**JR:** I'm not sure there is a generic answer, as there are many issues to consider. Many underutilized religious buildings in inner cities with shrunken congregations do not have the financial capacity to take care of what is often a beautiful, historic structure. The older buildings' populations are fading and the new ones are rising, and there's a facility gap between the two. We've seen that when they finally give up or move out, older congregations sell their buildings and use the funds to build new, smaller facilities. This is an excellent time to consider building a green facility. And the new purchasers often have funds for renovations, and can make their renovations green. This gives rise to a theological issue, particularly in churches whose populations have moved on because the congregation has aged. For example, some inner-city African American communities that are rooted in the gospel traditions of the South are being replaced by those having a prosperity theology and a new understanding of what the African American church is. The issue is not only about the building itself, but is about the cultural preservation of more traditional forms of worship.

**JD:** Isn't it more expensive to build green?

**JR:** It is more expensive to build green if you don't know what you're doing, and not more expensive if you are thoughtful about it. To design green effectively, one has to think systemically. For example, if you take an old building, and all you do is add solar panels, you will spend more money. But if you rethink the building, reorganize it to bring in more daylight, invest in insulation, you will typically spend no more than one percent more in creating a very green building.

**JD:** My congregation wants to find a green architect, how do we do that?

**JR:** It is important to find an architect who





*Retreat attendees meditate at the gazebo overlooking the Hudson River on the grounds of the Garrison Institute.*

Photo: Nick Hales

has a green track record, because an inexperienced architect will make mistakes and will learn at your expense. Often our team of owners' representatives is brought in by a client to help guide this process from start to finish so as to avoid such pitfalls.

**JD:** Are you saying someone who is a LEED-accredited professional?

**JR:** It certainly helps to look for members of the U.S. Green Building Council, because LEED accreditation is a start, but it is not enough; anyone can become a LEED-accredited professional by studying and passing a test. You want to work with someone who has actually designed and built green buildings, preferably green houses of worship, so that they understand your program. You also want to find green mechanical and structural engineers and landscape architects—to have the whole team as green as possible. Secondly, you want to organize your designers to work as a team, not

a hierarchy, to collaboratively find solutions together. Just as environmental responsibility is about integration, you have to have a design process that also integrates ideas.

**JD:** Wouldn't a completely green temple be devoid of art and other "non-necessary" trappings? How can a congregation integrate its liturgical needs (for altars, baptismal fonts, icons, etc.) with environmental responsibility?

**JR:** Of course, you should have all those things. Ritual is incredibly important. Do it right, and make things that endure. In many traditions, the quality of materials reflects the quality of intentions.

**JD:** So green doesn't mean "stripped down."

**JR:** Not at all. Green means stripped of indulgence, but full of essence. Green means designing with integrity, using local materials. Instead of importing Carrara marble, why not use local granite or the finest materials in your region—and use them wisely and with respect?

**JD:** What can environmentalists learn from religious communities?

**JR:** Einstein said that you cannot solve a problem with the mindset that created the problem. Environmental problems spring from the Newtonian Cartesian mindset that viewed everything in isolation instead of as part of a whole. The very foundation of most religious traditions is an interdependent view of the whole—that we are all one, and an exquisite interconnection exists among all things. Everything is tied together. You can get to this idea through science, you can get to it through belief in God, or through any religious view that sees wholeness. That is the only view that will solve our environmental, and social, problems.

We need to more deeply understand that wisdom, not as text, not as idea, but to feel it in an embodied way. To illustrate it simply, we all know how often our teenage children leave



lights on, but if they were to feel the polluting coal-fired power plant when they touched the switch, they'd be eager to turn it off when they didn't need it. It's about expanding our view to encompass the whole, and religion is a wonderful vehicle to do that. When we do, we transform our state of consciousness, which precedes the transformation of the fate of human development. The flaw is thinking we need to speak a specific language of environmentalism, but language is not it. We need to embody this ethos, to feel this sense of interconnected wholeness in our being and then act from it. Out of that, the right language will come. This is not about pandering to evangelicals to get their vote; this is about transforming the very way we view the world so that we act holistically.

*"Green means stripped of indulgence,  
but full of essence."*

**JD:** What has been the Evangelical impact on environmental issues?

**JR:** The Evangelical community has been a very important part of the movement dealing with climate change. Politicians often try to appeal to evangelicals to get their vote, but the Evangelical communities want to be listened to for their core values. In some ways, they are way ahead of the environmental community in their deep commitment to the social justice aspect of climate change. Many Evangelicals have contact with developing nations through missionaries. They know the desperate effects of climate change on the ground in the developing world, and they understand the real need for a climate change solution, one that could be a global socially just solution.

**JD:** Some say we are genetically encoded to seek meaningful connection with creation. Do you agree?

**JR:** I would modify that. To seek a meaningful connection with creation—the phrase itself describes an independence between humanity and creation, when the reality is that the connection already exists; we are a part of creation.

*"The very foundation of most religious traditions is  
an interdependent view of the whole—that we are all  
one and an exquisite interconnection exists among  
all things."*


**JD:** What in our society worries you most?

**JR:** I am most worried by the current state of political leadership, which utterly fails to see the interconnections among things, and has failed to understand the subtle balances that exist between social, cultural, historical, and political issues of energy. This is not a Republican or a Democratic issue, this is the way our current political system works—we are consistently blundering forward and making big mistakes that are compounding problems and will be harder and harder to reverse. I think we are on a very dangerous course.

The call to change has to come from the churches, from the people. We have to move beyond the call of the single issue. We need to hold our politicians accountable for the whole—not just the parts and pieces. We tend to give them a free pass on major things if they agree with us on minor things. For example, Congress just passed a damaging energy bill because politicians and environmentalists were so happy to get a modest improvement on auto efficiency. In exchange for a small improvement, they gave up a larger agenda of transformative energy issues that we as a

society really need, the issues of energy security, energy efficiency, and climate change.

**JD:** What gives you hope for the future?

**JR:** We are seeing an increase in citizens' participation. And a different kind of social movement is rising. Paul Hawken's book, *Blessed Unrest*, talks about the thousands of local community groups working to preserve the social and environmental world, a growing network that he calls "natural antibodies," comparable to the billions of antibodies that rally when our physical bodies are threatened. He sees this citizen activist movement, often with a spiritual bent, that is committed to social and environmental justice, as the earth's antibodies, and if those antibodies are nurtured, they will provide the solution. 

EARN AIA CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT FOR THIS ARTICLE BY ANSWERING THE EDUCATION ISSUE QUESTIONS POSTED ON THE IFRAA WEBSITE: [AIA.ORG/IFRAA](http://AIA.ORG/IFRAA).

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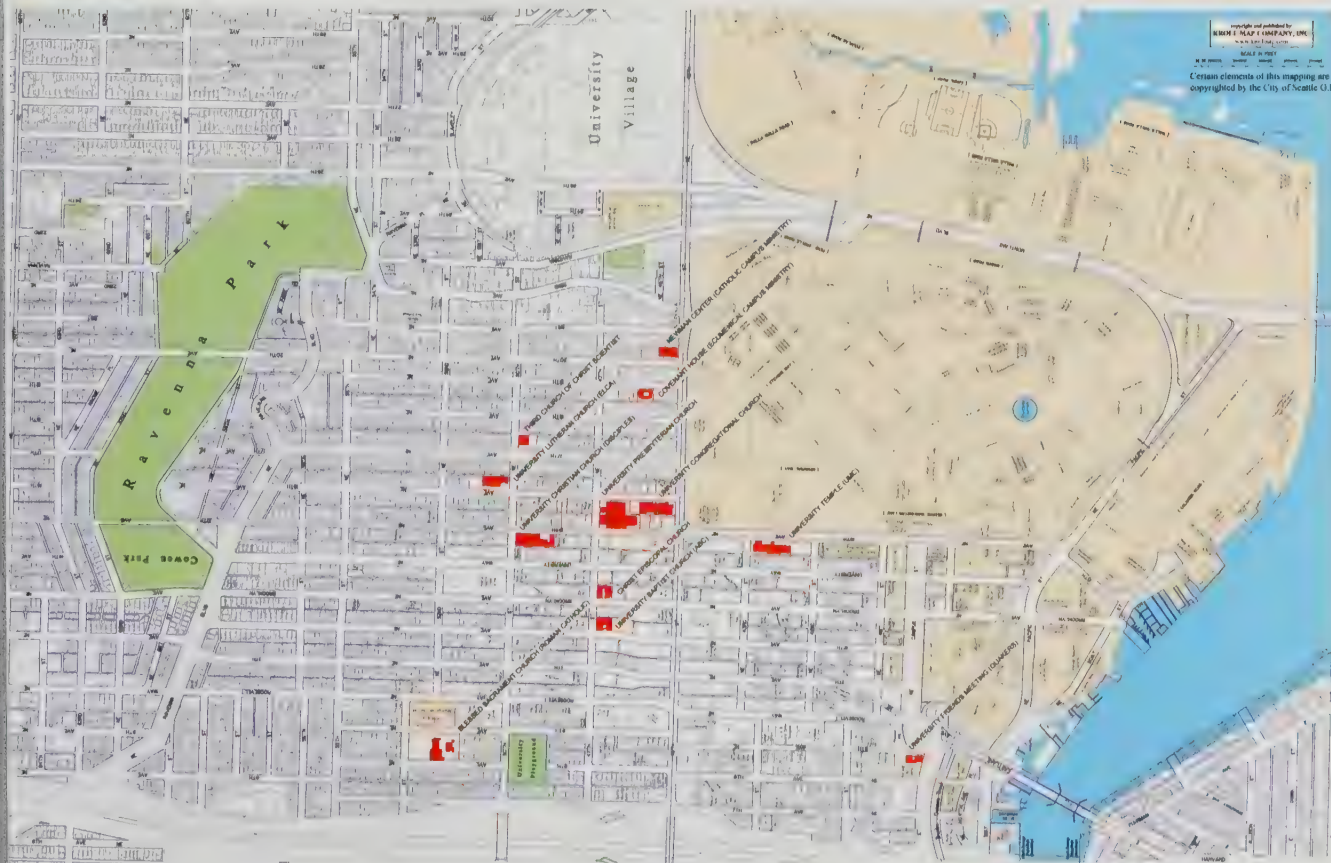
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# WOVEN TOGETHER: SEATTLE'S ECUMENICAL CAMPUS

BY CLINT PEHRSON, AIA



Map of downtown Seattle showing the locations of the University District Churches.

AS SEATTLE CONTINUES to seek sustainable new models for urban development and growth management, several churches envision a shared future in an ambitious new collocation project. The challenges are common and complex:

- Land-rich but cash-poor urban congregations, seeking a more economically and environmentally sustainable way to be Church in the 21st century.
- Aging, single-use church facilities with looming deferred-maintenance backlogs and daunting safety and accessibility deficiencies.

- Social justice and human service challenges in a neighborhood with tremendous development pressure and high land values.
- A “university ghetto” neighborhood in need of revitalization and public open space.
- An evolving Church, comprising separate denominations that have spent the past 50 years working nationally and internationally to knit themselves back together.

The Ecumenical Campus project gathers several congregations with diverse denominational ties into a single urban development

project in which they can worship separately and together in a variety of sacred spaces, while at the same time sharing many other functions in common; a single community of believers. Located at the heart of the neighborhood they share, it anchors them at a great urban crossroads. Through this model, they will be wiser stewards of the Earth’s resources, will transform themselves, and will embrace a powerful expression of unity.

## CONTEXT

Seattle’s University District is a neighborhood in transition. Like many western cities, Seattle is experiencing rapid growth. The University District is one of the city’s three “regional growth centers,” targeted to receive a disproportionate share of new homes and jobs during the next 20 years.

CLINT PEHRSON, AIA, PRACTICES ARCHITECTURE IN SEATTLE. THE ORIGINATOR OF THE ECUMENICAL CAMPUS CONCEPT, HE RECENTLY SUSPENDED HIS PRIVATE PRACTICE OF 20 YEARS AND IS NOW FULLY ENGAGED AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UDECC. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ECUMENICAL CAMPUS, VISIT [WWW.ECUMENICALCAMPUS.ORG](http://WWW.ECUMENICALCAMPUS.ORG).





*The University Temple (United Methodist Church) would become the anchor building of the proposed Ecumenical Campus.*

The University District, home to the massive University of Washington, is a complete urban neighborhood. It's an active commercial center, with recreational, dining, and cultural opportunities, dense housing, and great transit connections. During the past ten years, comprehensive regional planning has led to zoning changes, expansion of public transit options, and other changes in land-use policy. The results of these changes are now being felt. Land values are rising quickly, and pressure is increasing for higher-density redevelopment.

Abiding within this context is a community of churches that have shared the University District for a century. As "metropolitan congregations," these urban churches draw their members from the greater Seattle metro area. Their outreach ministries include support for a broad range of social service organizations vital to the community. More than 20 service providers call the neighborhood home, many of which are housed within church buildings dispersed throughout the neighborhood.

In recent years, these churches have been transforming themselves into the "University District Ecumenical Parish." This cross-polity group is a local expression of the international ecumenical movement that has been spreading among many Christian denominations for the

last half-century. The growing movement is a deliberate counterpoint to the disunity which has characterized so much of the Church's history. Locally, the Ecumenical Parish has reinforced already strong bonds between the University District churches. Manifestations of this unity include a variety of shared worship services throughout the church year: "pulpit exchanges" wherein clergy exchange preaching duties in each other's congregations; diverse fellowship; and educational opportunities.

#### COMMON CHALLENGES

On February 1, 2004, 150 people from ten University District churches gathered on a Super Bowl Sunday for an event dubbed the "Ultimate Potluck." That day, they shared a meal and a discussion about the unique ecumenical relationship binding their congregations together.

That first meeting led to the realization that these churches have much in common, particularly with regard to their most daunting challenges. Like many urban churches, they are confronted with the realities of aging, unsustainable, single-use facilities. Their membership numbers are significantly smaller than when their World War I vintage buildings were constructed, meaning that the congregations

are often poorly matched to their facilities. Issues commonly include safety and accessibility deficiencies, aging building systems, and poor energy efficiency. Parking shortages are common. Contractors and consultants have to be paid for work once done by member volunteers. Deferred maintenance lists grow longer each year.

These challenges, however, stand in marked contrast with the lively, progressive culture that the University District churches share. As they look to the future, these congregations remain committed to sustaining vital, activist ministries emphasizing social justice and peace, community engagement and inclusive fellowship.

#### THE LEARNING CURVE

Looking forward, it seemed that a collaborative approach among the churches might serve their collective best interests in the pursuit of new strategies that had previously eluded them. An ad hoc task force was formed to learn as much as possible about the particular circumstances of each congregation. Meeting monthly, this "Ecumenical Stewardship Task Force" evolved into an active working group, with representatives appointed by the governing bodies of eight neighborhood churches: Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal



Congregational, Disciples of Christ, American Baptist, Quaker, and Christian Science.

The task force gathered and examined a mountain of data: institutional, historical, financial, and architectural. A thorough analysis of all existing facilities was conducted, including the preparation of measured drawings of every church building. (In addition to eight parish churches, this study also included Covenant House, an ecumenical facility housing campus ministry programs for seven denominations.)

The buildings of these institutions contained more than 314,000 square feet of floor space, and occupied 313,000 square feet (over seven acres) of highly valued real estate. Amazingly, the churches owned all of this property outright, with almost no debt. To their astonishment, they realized that together they held developable real estate with a market value in the neighborhood of \$60 million! To leave this abundance untapped was poor stewardship of their resources, at a time when their progressive goals for service, mission, and ministry were growing more ambitious than ever.

#### THE "BIG IDEA"

As the conversation expanded, an idea emerged: What if some of these aging, single-use facilities were sold, and the equity pooled

into a new mixed-use facility that could house multiple congregations? At first murmured cautiously, the idea started to gain traction as the ongoing conversation began to give shape to the concept. Here was a group of faith communities with much in common. Still, each denomination had traditions that were deeply valued, mostly centering on their distinctive approaches to corporate worship. If a facility could be created that would permit each congregation to worship according to their unique traditions, yet enable them to share other facilities as part of a larger faith community, great advantages might be found. Since they already valued a great sense of community, shared fellowship facilities made sense. As all of the churches have enriching programs of adult study and discourse, as well as educational programs for children and youth, shared classroom space is also beneficial. Shared building infrastructure and parking are obvious benefits as well.

Deepening their commitment to a variety of social service providers, the churches can also provide better facilities for these essential services, now scattered throughout the neighborhood. Gathering several of these operations into a single, flexible location, the churches can provide more space of higher quality than the cramped and inefficient spaces now available.

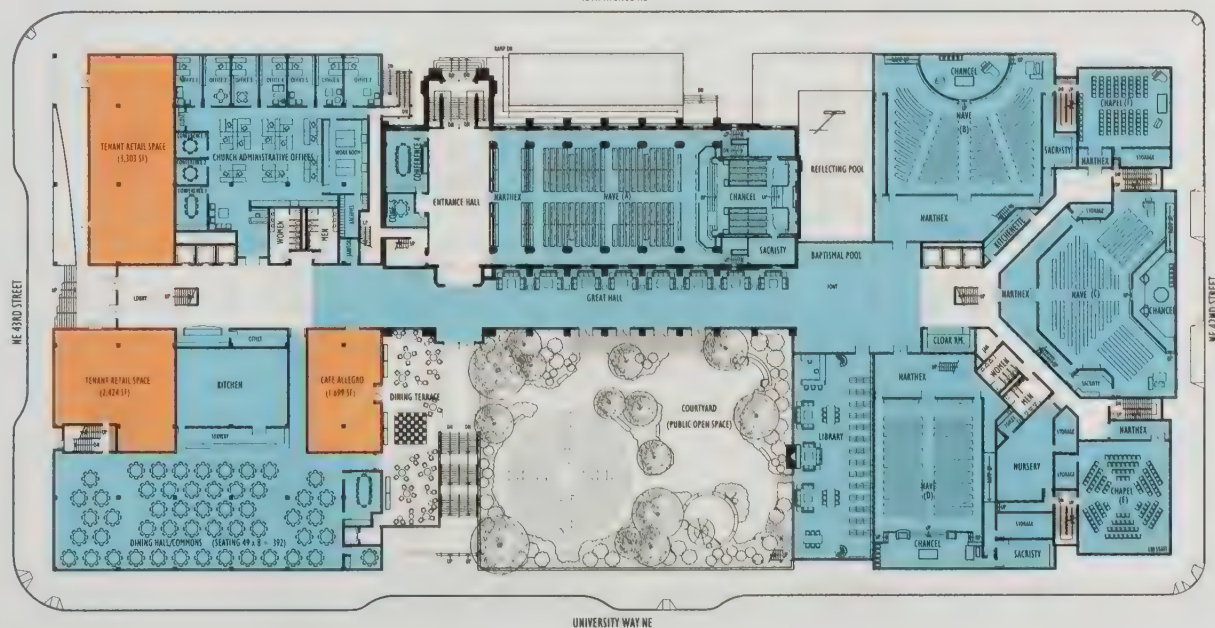
This clustering of services will also improve coordination between providers.

A new building with a variety of assembly spaces and classrooms provides a rare opportunity to connect with the wider community. Diverse civic, cultural, and academic activities promise to activate the facilities of churches that otherwise sit idle too often. Worship calls for spiritually uplifting sacred spaces, but those same spaces can also be designed to work well for secular events.

Since these churches want to be where the most people are, it makes sense to target a location right in the midst of a busy urban center. This also means the new facility will be well located for commercial enterprises behind street-activating storefronts. Incorporating commercial uses into an institutional project helps to capitalize project costs, generates reliable income to cover ongoing operating costs, and helps to knit the whole into the fine-grained fabric of the neighborhood. Locally owned, owner-operated enterprises will be selected for their ability to make a genuine contribution to the sense of a lively and healthy "commons" for the whole community.

Key to the Ecumenical Campus concept is the provision of public open space, privately owned and operated, secured at night and for special events, but otherwise open and available as a gift

15TH AVENUE NE



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LEVEL 1 (CHURCHES)  
NO SCALE

*The street level plan of the block development shows multiple clustered worship spaces sharing common areas and surrounding a garden at mid-block.*



to the community, a public benefit that will further enrich the neighborhood. The University District has a chronic shortage of park facilities. Such “breathing room” will be increasingly important (and increasingly difficult to achieve) as neighborhood density increases.

Finally, existing church real estate no longer needed after completion of the Ecumenical Campus can be made available to low-income housing providers, to create hundreds of housing units dispersed throughout the neighborhood. Affordable housing for University faculty and staff, student housing, low-income housing for disadvantaged populations, and senior housing are all under consideration.

#### THE VISION

Thus was born the vision for a new building type: a civic commons integrated into the mixed-use fabric of a vital urban center, providing a more sustainable home for multiple faith communities and the campus ministry programs and social service agencies they support. The Ecumenical Campus has the potential to transform these churches, as well as the surrounding community.


The illustrations that accompany this article are from the planning study developed

to model the project concept. The project site has not yet been finalized, but the study shows the project integrated with the existing sanctuary of University Temple (United Methodist Church), a fine Gothic Revival sanctuary designed by noted Seattle architect John Graham, Sr., and completed in 1927. This location, adjacent to the main campus of the University of Washington and central to the business district, is also adjacent to a planned light-rail subway station and to more than 20 public transit routes with direct service to surrounding neighborhoods and the greater metropolitan area. Preservation and restoration of the iconic sanctuary is an important project element.

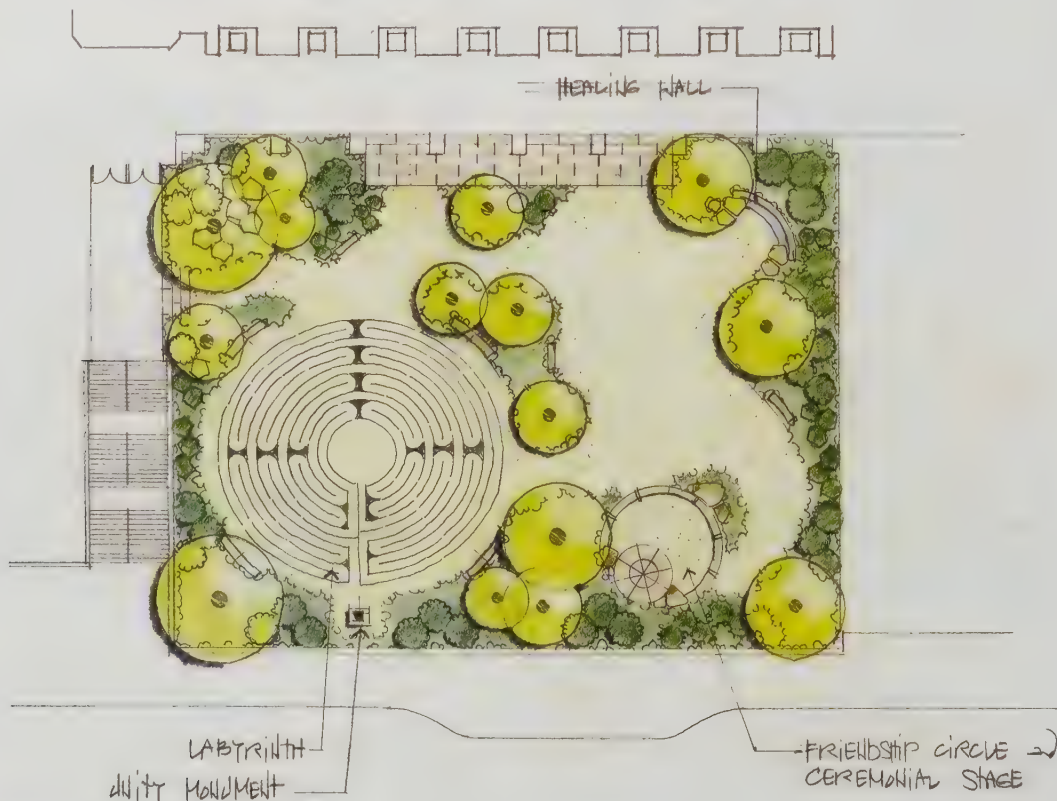
#### UDECC

Last year, after three years of steady concept development and consensus building, six worshiping communities made the commitment to form and fund a new nonprofit development corporation for the purpose of completing a full feasibility study of the Ecumenical Campus concept. Additional churches continue to consider joining the effort as full participants. The University District Ecumenical Campus Coalition (UDECC) was incorporated in June

2007, and is expected to deliver its feasibility report to the partner institutions in June 2008. The feasibility study will address project scope, program, schedule and budget, site control, market analysis, governance, and ownership issues (including a great deal of legal work). Each partner institution will then have to resolve for itself the question of whether or not it is ready to move on from its current facility and be collocated with its neighbors at the Ecumenical Campus. Occupancy is projected for mid-2012.

The UDECC logo is a labyrinth. Not only are labyrinths graphically compelling and iconic, but there is also a long tradition in many churches of walking a labyrinth as a spiritual exercise. As you contemplatively wend your way through the labyrinth's twists and turns, you leave one reality behind, and move patiently toward your goal, where a new reality awaits. The process of building consensus within a single worshiping community is daunting, even for the simple decisions. To do so with multiple congregations simultaneously, when the questions are of such existential significance, is a profoundly labyrinthine exercise, yet one that promises a new model of urban church sustainability on multiple levels. 

*Detail of the garden space that would be located on the west edge of the Ecumenical Campus development.*





# Affirming Faith Through Sustainability



THE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION

Synagogue exterior, with large glass wall that allows ample daylight.  
Courtesy of DPici Visualization, Inc. and Ross Barney Architects

By CAROL ROSS BARNEY, FAIA

**T**HE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION (JRC) in north suburban Chicago is expected to inaugurate the greenest synagogue in North America this year with a LEED Platinum Certified building.

"The new synagogue represents a five-year process of planning and fundraising, and our congregation's commitment to putting our faith into practice. The new structure is not only state-of-the-art in terms of environmental concerns and energy efficiency, it is also designed to inspire and renew our faith," said Alan Saposnik, project manager and past president of the JRC.

The JRC, through its board, mandated a LEED Platinum building design. Our firm, Ross Barney Architects of Chicago, worked closely with the building committee to achieve a design that balances the limitations of a small site with an ambitious program that uniformly promotes the congregation's worship, educational, and community objectives.

"JRC's commitment to building a green synagogue facility ultimately comes from central values from Jewish tradition," said Rabbi Brant Rosen of the congregation. "The Torah teaches us that the Earth does not belong to us – that we are but stewards of God's creation. Building the most sustainable facility possible was for us a religious act. In the end, we have learned that how we construct our building is actually more important than the building itself. Of course we are proud of the attention our construction project has attracted – but the true honor for us will be when other houses of worship opt for LEED certification as well."

The new green JRC synagogue represents the commitment of its members to *Tikkun HaNefesh V'Olam*, the healing and repair of the individual person and the world at large. Mordechai Kaplan, the founder

of the Reconstructionist movement within Judaism, noted, "A theology which is not a plan of social action is merely a way of preaching and praying. It is a menu without the dinner."

The project demolished the original 21,400-square-foot synagogue and constructed a new 31,600-square-foot, three-story facility on the same site. The new building has three floors. There are new spaces for worship and social events, as well as classrooms for early childhood, religious, and adult education programs; space for the congregation's staff; a large teaching kitchen; spaces for the youth group and arts and crafts; and a library with a media center and language laboratory.

Several ideas were formulated to make a sustainable transition from old to new. The new building was built on the foundations of the old. Rubble was placed in wire cages to create gabion rubble walls that retain the edges of gardens and children's playgrounds, sunken so that lower-level spaces get as much natural light as spaces above. The memorial trees that shaded the existing building were cut down and reconstituted as paneling on the ceremonial door in order to preserve the memory of those associated with their planting and care. The congregation has placed throughout the building their collected words – lyrics, testaments, calls for protest – to be enshrined in the building as a permanent testimonial of the congregation's work. A strong representation of artists and artisans has coordinated the incorporation of fiber and ceramic art in the design and construction of the building.

The plan to achieve a LEED Platinum rating required careful consideration of sustainable strategies, and a comprehensive, holistic approach to the building design. The process included integration of site design, architectural planning, building materials, natural and mechanical ventilation schemes, natural and artificial lighting, and HVAC and lighting controls. With an eye to electrical and water efficiencies, the synagogue building maximizes the latest in technological and design advances to

CAROL ROSS BARNEY IS FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL OF ROSS BARNEY ARCHITECTS IN CHICAGO. HER WORK HAS BEEN AWARDED NUMEROUS HONORS, INCLUDING FOUR HONOR AWARDS FROM THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND MORE THAN 20 AWARDS FROM THE AIA CHICAGO CHAPTER.




minimize the use of nonrenewable resources, while also maximizing the use of natural light and air to reduce reliance on interior lighting, heating, and air conditioning, as weather permits (see the list of sustainable features below).

The new synagogue also features products made with rapidly renewable materials. More than 40 percent of the building is constructed with regionally manufactured materials. The one notable exception is the Jerusalem Stone used on the entrance wall, chapel, and sanctuary. The material was chosen for its spiritual and special connection to Judaism and Israel. However, the stone represents less than 1.5 percent of the total construction costs.

The HVAC system employs a number of strategies to reduce energy consumption and improve the indoor environmental quality. First, the sanctuary was designed with displacement ventilation. Second, each space has a dedicated variable air volume (VAV) box controlled by occupancy and CO<sub>2</sub> sensors. The system is designed to be responsive to the almost daily variations in the building's operation. Third, the congregation expressed a strong desire to integrate natural ventilation into the new building. To accomplish this goal, there are operable windows

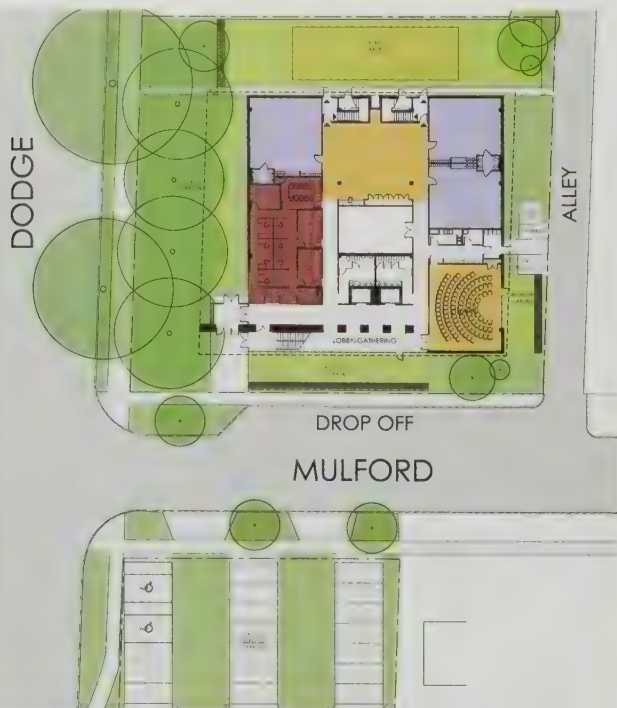
in all perimeter spaces. In addition, the interior lighting incorporates the use of architectural planning and the latest technology to reduce energy consumption and improve the quality of the indoor space. The building plan places more than 90 percent of the occupied spaces on the exterior, with access to daylight and views. To complement the natural light sources, the artificial lighting in the sanctuary is both dimmable and controlled by photocells. In the classrooms, the lights are controlled by occupancy sensors and are dual switched.

Fulfilling the vision of a green synagogue involves more than the internal environmental considerations. A sustainable design takes into account the interaction of the synagogue and its members with their community environment. This includes details such as preferred parking for hybrid vehicles and the encouragement of carpooling and alternative transportation to the synagogue, including public transportation, walking, and bicycling; a storm water detention system to ease impact on the natural environment and municipal systems; and exterior light fixtures with full cut-off optics to mitigate light pollution.

The congregation intends to be a leader within the larger community by demonstrating the benefits of sustainable building design. 



*Sanctuary interior maximizes natural lighting and ventilation with operable windows.*



*Synagogue site plan, which includes pervious parking surfaces.*

## SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION FEATURES

### Sustainable Sites

- Urban site located within a quarter-mile of public bus lines
- Urban site located within a half-mile of 20 community services
- Preferred parking for hybrid vehicles and carpooling
- Reflective roof to mitigate "heat island" effect
- Landscaped to mitigate the "heat island" effect
- Storm water detention system to ease impact on natural environment and municipal systems
- Exterior light fixtures with full cut-off optics to mitigate light pollution
- Solar-powered light fixtures to illuminate parking lot

### Water Efficiency

- Landscape with native or adapted vegetation, including plants saved from original landscaping
- No permanent irrigation system
- Low-consumption water closets with dual-flush flushometers
- Low-consumption urinals
- Low flow, metered lavatories

### Energy and Atmosphere

- Energy-efficient design saves 40 percent over baseline
- Modular chiller in 15-ton increments
- Boiler with 98 percent efficiency
- Third-party commissioning
- Certificates for wind power
- T5 fluorescent lighting
- Cold cathode lighting
- LED lighting
- Solar tubes for natural daylight
- Dimming and photocell control for daylighting sanctuary
- Occupancy sensors for control of artificial lighting
- Dual-switched lamping of light fixtures

### Indoor Environmental Quality

- Increased ventilation effectiveness
- Displacement ventilation in sanctuary
- Carbon dioxide monitoring for control of fresh-air intake
- Access to daylight and views for over 90 percent of the spaces
- Low-VOC emitting materials

### Materials and Resources

- More than 95 percent of demolition waste diverted from landfills
- Concrete and brick from demolished building crushed and used as engineered fill
- Reclaimed brick and limestone for gabion site walls
- Reclaimed wood for exterior siding, interior walls, bimah floor, and ceremonial door
- More than 40 percent of materials from recycled content, including drywall and ceiling tile
- Cabinets and shelving of Dakota Burl, made from sunflower seed husks
- Carpet made from bio-based hybrid yarn
- More than 40 percent of materials from local and regional sources
- More than 50 percent of wood from certified sources

### Recycled-Content Materials

- Concrete with fly ash
- Synthetic gypsum wallboard
- Playground mulch
- Structural, reinforcing, and miscellaneous steel
- Exterior and interior metal studs
- Building insulation
- Steel doors and frames
- Countertops
- Toilet partitions
- Ceiling tile
- Carpet





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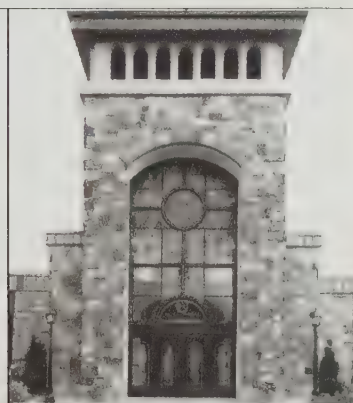
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# NOTES & COMMENTS

## AWARDS PROGRAM DEADLINES

It's not too early to prepare your submissions to the 2008 Faith & Form/IFRAA International Awards Program. Registration must be completed by July 1, and submissions must be made by July 18. The awards program is open to artists, architects, and designers worldwide. Information on the awards program and registration materials can be found on the Faith & Form website at: [www.faithandform.com/awards/call\\_for\\_entries](http://www.faithandform.com/awards/call_for_entries). If you have questions, please contact *Faith & Form's* Trena McClure at [tmccclure@faithandform.com](mailto:tmccclure@faithandform.com), or call her at: 704-927-2253.

## JOURNEY TO TURKEY IN JUNE

Journeys Overseas, a part of the Western Theological Seminary is offering a two-week tour in June led by Donald J. Bruggink, Western's James A.H. Cornell Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology, to "Turkey: Cradle of Christianity." More information on itinerary, accommodations, and registration is available on the Journeys Overseas website: <http://journey.westernsem.edu/programs/overseas/previous/turkey>

## CLARIFICATION

Ethan Anthony's article, "The Function of Tradition in Religious Architecture" (Volume 40, Issue 2), failed to mention that Willet Hauser Architectural Glass was the designer of the stained glass windows shown on pages 14-15.

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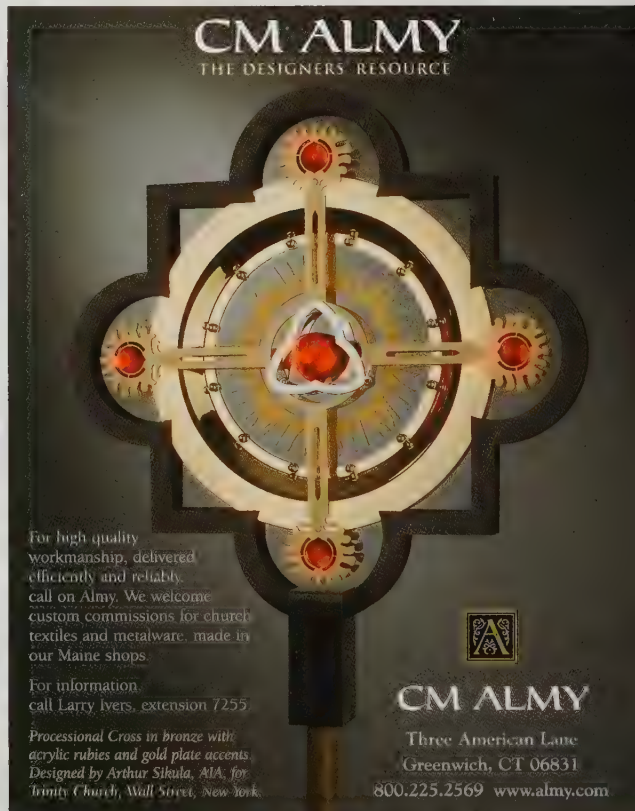
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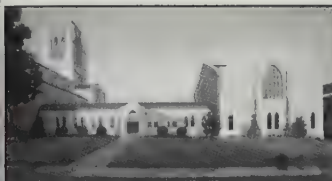
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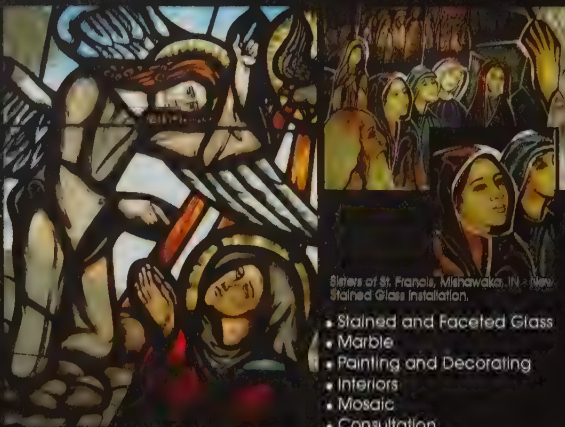
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## A HAPPY STORY

JUST ONE MORE THING... ★ BETTY H. MEYER

I wonder sometimes, and maybe you do too, what has happened in the lives of some of the artists and architects who have been featured in *Faith & Form*. Was time good to them in their future or was the article the beginning of a slowing down process? I have a happy story to tell you. An architect named Paul Staurand wrote a letter to his friend and former professor, Saunders Schultz, telling him that he had recently subscribed to a journal called *Faith & Form*, and wondered if he had heard of it. He did not know that we had once featured an article by Schultz entitled "God's Mountain."

Shortly after this we received a letter from the professor/artist himself. He told us that it was in 1966 when he was first challenged by the Jewish community in Rockford, Illinois, to talk with them about a project that would serve as a visionary mythic message for their congregation. After much discussion, they finally opted for a glass sculpture to be called "God's Mountain," a symbol of humankind's attempt to climb the heights of its aspirations. It is thought to be the first time that flat stained glass, chunk glass, and metal were combined in a sculptural window, and it received the 13th American Institute of Architects' Jury Award. Schultz's sculptures today are located in 34 states, Washington, D.C., Jedda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Moscow. I counted 15 awards in his portfolio and noted that he has taught more than 200 classes and symposia at various universities. He is now working hard for acceptance of his proposed Arch/Gateway in East St. Louis, which would relate aesthetically to Eero Saarinen's Arch on the west side of the river.

Schultz (known as Sandy) defines himself as a site-specific sculptor/visionary, who for the past 15 years has dedicated a significant portion of his time to developing visionary projects with a social consciousness. He describes all his projects as "collaborative community visioning." When a Baptist woman asked him during the installation of Yod Menorah in Washington, D.C., "Do you mind if I love it? To me it represents hands reaching up," Sandy said he knew that the sculpture was a success.


Sandy has touched many with his work. "There are dozens of memorials for my husband.... 'Aspirations' is unique because it captures his essence," said Coretta Scott King. Landscape architect Roy Mann said: "Working with you, viewing your art and discussing ideas, is as inspirational as experiencing a great poem." And Dean Roger DesRosiers of the Washington University School of Fine Arts noted: "Your significant architectural sculpture is of our time as well as timeless."

I want to close with some of Sandy's own words that delight me because they show that, with all his seriousness and hard work, he also has a sense of humor:

"At age 80 I'm still creating sculpture. My newest work is for the Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. In 1969 I won a national competition to do some work for them and I feel good they have called me back now to do some exterior sculpture. The president has promised that if they need another sculpture in 40 years the work will be mine."

Naturally, I hope that this kind of happy story will come true for each of you.

BETTY H. MEYER IS EDITOR EMERITUS OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT [bmeyer@faithandform.com](mailto:bmeyer@faithandform.com)



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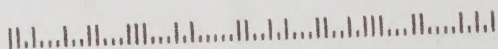
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